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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR SHIVERS
CENTCOM CG CJTF-82, POLAD, JICCENT

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PAG DISCUSSES SCHOOL SECURITY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 12 the Policy Action Group (PAG) chaired by NSA Rassoul discussed school security. Education Minister Atmar reported that there had been 20 attacks against schools in the previous week. Education Minister Atmar assessed that the Taliban have shifted their focus from destroying school buildings to attacking students and teachers. Atmar said that the GoA had decided that a "new paradigm" for school security needed to be developed. He said there also was a need to develop a new approach on strategic communications to address the issue, but cautioned that a balance would need to be struck in the messaging, as it would be important to avoid creating a sense of panic among students and their parents. On July 16, A/DCM attended a meeting on school security chaired by Atmar and attended by relevant Afghan interagency officials, as well as international community representatives. Atmar advocated developing plans to provide security at 1,000 schools in the 18 most vulnerable provinces. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On July 12 the regular Policy Action Group (PAG) chaired by NSA Rassoul discussed school security (one of a number of topics). Education Minister Atmar reported that there had been 20 attacks against schools in the previous week. Ten students and teachers had been killed in those attacks, and seven wounded; two schools were burned. Atmar assessed that the attacks on the students and teachers indicated a recent trend in which the Taliban have shifted their focus from destroying school buildings to attacking the people studying and working there. He concluded that the Taliban were frustrated by their inability to challenge ISAF/OEF forces effectively, and thus were targeting schools, students, and teachers with the objective of creating resentment in the Afghan population against the GoA for not being able to provide security.

¶3. (SBU) Atmar said that the Office of the National Security Council (ONSC) had discussed the matter and decided that a "new paradigm" for school security needed to be developed. To that end, the ONSC was considering "community policing" or an extension of the duties of Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP). President Karzai had instructed the ONSC to discuss the matter further with the international community. Atmar explained that there seemed to be more support for some

kind of local community-based security rather than attempting to use the ANAP. He noted that the Ministry of Education had met with the 34 MOI liaison officers to the provinces, National Directorate of Security (NDS) representatives from each of the provinces, and UNAMA to discuss the matter. The next step would be convening a technical team to launch a consultative process with provincial leaders. Atmar requested the MOI to instruct governors to participate in the consultative process, and asked that an ONSC representative be assigned to participate in the meetings.

14. (SBU) Ambassador Wood emphasized the USG's strong support for increasing school security, and noted the importance of getting the word out about such Taliban barbarity, to build support at the provincial level, where some governors might assume that such attacks are only a local problem. NEA Naderi concurred, arguing for the need to "create a sense of outrage" among the Afghan population. Atmar noted that President Karzai had spoken out on the issue frequently, but acknowledged disappointment in the performance of GoA mullahs, who "were not proactive enough" in condemning such attacks. He said the mullahs felt vulnerable and feared they would be targeted if they speak out. Atmar said there was a need to develop a new approach on strategic communications to address the issue, adding that he would welcome technical and funding assistance from the international community in developing a new approach. He cautioned, however, that a balance would need to be struck in the messaging, as it would be important to avoid creating a sense of panic among students and their parents -- "there is a limit to how much risk the parents can accept" in sending their children to school. (Note: At its weekly meeting on July 15, the PAG's Strategic Communications Working Group discussed at some length the need for a new strategic communications approach

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to this issue and agreed to work with the secretariat staff at the National Communications Coordination Center to develop a plan for PAG approval. End Note)

15. (SBU) On July 16, A/DCM participated in a meeting on school security chaired by Atmar and attended by relevant Afghan interagency officials, as well as international community representatives. Atmar advocated developing plans to provide security at 1,000 schools in the 18 most vulnerable provinces. During the discussion, a general consensus emerged in favor of a standing up local school guard personnel, rather than attempting to employ the ANAP for this specific purpose. A technical group was established to develop a detailed proposal, including structures and necessary resources. While most participants in the discussion advocated that the school guards should not be under the MOI chain-of-command, Atmar expressed some reservations about having them under the Ministry of Education, as that could possibly lead to misunderstanding about his ministry's motives.
WOOD